

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Theater People From Ohio

Personal Experiences

O. H. 582

JAMES MACAK

Interviewed

by

Carol Mills

on

July 22, 1982

## JAMES MACAK

Jim Macak is a young man who has so many diverse talents that it is difficult to keep up with him. He writes political and theatrical columns for the Warren Tribune Chronicle, and manages to act in plays as well as write them. Mr. Macak is well-traveled and brings his cosmopolitan personality to bear in his dual careers in Ohio.

Jim claims he was always a loner, who spent his childhood in Akron and Warren, reading and fantasizing. Jim is of Czechoslovakian, Yugoslavian, and Hungarian descent, and learned from his practical family to earn his own way at a young age. Jim embarked on his writing career in the eighth grade, sending off manuscripts to magazines at that tender age.

After graduation from Akron University, Jim began working as a newspaper reporter, working on his theater career part-time. He also taught one year in an inner city school, where he resolved that that was certainly not his cup of tea.

At present, Jim is working on his play in progress, producing his last completed work, Pipers, a farcical comedy-melodrama, with unexpected religious overtones woven into the tale of a band of minstrel actors, and of course, putting in his regular work week at his desk at the Warren Tribune Chronicle.

Jim is on his way to the Edinborough Festival in Scotland, more of the summer time peregrinations he has come to expect as his due each year. Jim's plans for next year include the hope that he may study playwriting at Yale, and his circle of intimates are all holding their breath waiting to see if he does get in.

Jim Macak claims he does not know which path he will follow: theater or journalism. Either way, he will leave his own unique stamp on whatever profession is finally graced by his presence. He has talent, perseverance, and well-rounded personality to do either or both.

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INTERVIEWEE: JAMES MACAK

INTERVIEWER: Carol Mills

SUBJECT: Journalism, Playwright, Plays, Yale

DATE: July 22, 1982

CM: This is an oral history interview being conducted with Jim Macak from Warren, Ohio. Mr. Macak is a political reporter, an acting editorial page editor, and a theater columnist for the Warren Tribune. In addition, he is also an actor and a playwright. We are conducting this interview in Youngstown, Ohio although Mr. Macak is from Warren. The date is July 22, 1982.

We'll start with Jim Macak telling us the beginnings of his life, if he wants to.

JM: My ancestors came from Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia. My great-grandparents were basically peasant farmers; some of them worked on the railroad. The only one with any distinguished background was a great grandfather on my father's side who worked as an overseer for a large forest.

CM: Like "The Cherry Orchard".

JM: Very good.

CM: That's the image I got when you talked to me about that.

JM: Yes, see I never thought of that image before. I think it's quite appropriate. Anyway, he did very well and managed to send some of his kids abroad--send them to Europe for an education. Eventually, a set of families immigrated to this country and set up shop in places like Pennsylvania and Akron, Ohio, working in the coal mines and rubber factories. My parents met in Akron. My father was a maintenance repairman for B.F. Goodrich. My mother was an employee at some office or other. Then they married and had five boys. I

am the third of the five. I was born in 1953 in Akron. The life there was solidly middle class. There's not too much I remember about it. I don't think we were all that close of a family. My brothers and I were three years apart. We got along fine, but we weren't all that chummy. We each had our own friends, our own little world. I was bookish from the start. I can remember sitting in the car reading while my parents would set up camp in some park. They were camping and sleeping in the tent, while I would just want to stay in the car with the light on to read, something my father couldn't comprehend at all. We had quite a few lively discussions about that. I went to Catholic parochial schools and a Catholic high school.

CM: In Akron?

JM: Right.

CM: Do you know the name of them?

JM: St. Paul's Catholic School and Archbishop Hoban High School. It was my decision to go to the high school. My parents wanted to send me to public school, but my friends were going there. So I got a job and paid most of my tuition. My first job was groundskeeper for the Barberton Speedway. I had to clean the pits, clean the tracks, and work on the sweaty Saturday afternoons for about \$1.30 an hour or something like that. Then I got a job as a stockboy at Acme Click. It paid considerably a lot better. That put me through the remainder of high school and practically all the way through college.

CM: Let me ask you about that high school. Was it that important to go, to be with those other people that you knew in Catholic high school?

JM: I think it was. I think so for this reason. The first school I went to was St. John's in Akron. I went there in kindergarten and first grade. For reasons that are too complex to explain, the family shifted over to St. Paul's. I remember that was very traumatic for me. I lost all of my friends and it was very hard for me to make new friends. I think that scared me more than anything else. I didn't want to go through that again. I'm not an extrovert. I'm very private, very much a loner. The friends I do have I cherish.

CM: You learned that early. It really took me a long time to learn that.

JM: I wanted to stick with them, and I did. I participated in a few activities in school, the yearbook and the student newspaper. I never was all that athletic. I was on a couple basketball teams, played intramurals. That was about it.

CM: Did you show a bent then toward writing?

JM: Yes, I think then, art and writing. I was interested in the student newspaper from the start, edited the school yearbook. From there I wanted to go to Kent State to major in journalism, but I couldn't swing it. I would have to give up my job at the grocery store because I couldn't travel back and forth. That was quite a distance. With great reluctance I went to the University of Akron. I was interested in journalism but there was really nothing to major in there, in journalism. So I toyed with the idea of being an art student. It was just too expensive and the teachers weren't that thrilling so I dropped that. I ended up with a major in English literature with enough courses to be certified in education.

CM: That's the same thing I did.

JM: Really.

CM: Yes. I don't find it very interesting.

JM: Probably very boring as a matter of fact. I had a good time in college. I would like to go back, for all the wrong reasons.

CM: You paid your own way?

JM: Yes, I paid my own way. I entered the student newspaper there, was active in student government, in University Council; one of the big shots on campus I guess. I endeared myself to certain people in high places so I was able to win a scholarship and study in London for several weeks. I won another scholarship and toured the Far East. I won another scholarship and toured South America. It wasn't based on intellectual achievement. They had the seed money for you, but you had to come up with funds of your own to pay for half of it.

CM: But why all these traveling scholarships? Why did they all afford travel?

JM: Well, that's what I was interested in. The dean conducted these Classrooms Around the World projects, basically for teachers. This is the dean of education. They always tried to save some money for students to take along. I was the only student around who had sufficient amount of money thanks to my days as a stockboy. So I was able to take advantage of the scholarship.

CM: You mean you were able to pay your own way to school and stash some money too?

JM: Oh, yes.

CM: That is really commendable.

JM: Thank you.

CM: Right where we are at this time, before we get into your work proper, I would like you to talk about the flavor.

JM: We sound so formal don't we?

CM: The flavor in your life in Ohio, what you liked about growing up in Ohio and what you didn't like, how you think it affected you, pro and con. The background. I know a lot of people I talked to later on say, "I didn't realize I got a really substantial background growing up in Ohio." They're now in a more sophisticated atmosphere. I just wondered what your feeling is on all that?

JM: I sort of felt kind of stifled. I'm not really sure why. I mean my parents were anxious for me to play sports and other things in there, very encouraging. But for some reason I felt isolated. I didn't make as many friends as I should have. I didn't try as many things as I should have. I didn't do all the crazy, immoral, rotten things that kids should do at that age.

CM: Are you sure we're supposed to. I didn't do them either. I don't know maybe that's just a myth that everybody does them.

JM: Maybe that is, I don't know. I didn't live the "American Graffiti" life. I feel cheated, you know. I was a good kid. I managed to get away with things, with a certain finesse, but I never really got in trouble, which was kind of a shame, I guess.

CM: Tell me about a typical summer. You started to work so young, but I mean a carefree summer in Ohio that you would spend while you were still in school?

JM: I remember working at the Barberton Speedway one Saturday afternoon. They sort of left me in charge with a friend of mine. This is one of the few times I really broke out of my mold, I guess. We thought we could sneak into the concession stand. The window was slightly ajar. If we could just move it a little bit we could get some free pop and chips. We were wiggling with the window and it broke. It set off the alarm. So, what the hell do we do? So what we did was take a stone and smash it through the window. We made it look like somebody broke in. Then we called the police and said somebody threw a stone and ran off. That worked out all right, but we weren't satisfied with that. We decided maybe we'll break into the control tower, you know, after the police left. We did manage to break into it without too much trouble. We got up into the control tower with the

microphones. We were broadcasting imaginary races and all kinds of crazy things. The neighbors got interested in that and they called the police. They came back out there again. We apologized and went through the whole thing. It was just a crazy time. It was one of the few times I was just rotten to the core. I pretty much got away with it like I usually did. It's boring, isn't it?

CM: No, I like stories like that. I want you to tell me about your life. I want to know what you did, just plain old Jim.

JM: What else?

CM: When you were little, very little, what do you remember? Going places, seeing your grandparents, or going on trips with your parents--growing up in Ohio.

JM: I have to think about it. I think I blocked all that out. As a paperboy, there was this one lady's house I used to like to stop. I was a paperboy in junior high. One of the first books that ever hooked me was Agatha Christie's Ten Little Indians. From that point on I was just an Agatha Christie fanatic. I remember going over to her house and talking about murder mysteries. I wrote about three of them. I always rushed over there to share them. She would pick apart the plot and talk about it with me.

CM: What was this woman's name?

JM: Mrs. Nelson. She lived on, I think, Rowe. It's about two blocks away, brown house. Husband's a big guy, nice guy. He would come in and we would talk about something else. I would be anxious for him to leave so we could get back and start talking about murder. I remember sending out my first typed pages of short stories to Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine and getting the usual rejection slip.

CM: How old were you then?

JM: I was in eighth grade, I think.

CM: That's not usual.

JM: I would send it back and put a little piece of tape between the third and fourth page. They would send it back. "You didn't even read this; you just left the tape like it was!"

CM: You would trap them?

JM: Yes.

CM: In the eighth grade to be already sending your stories off shows a certain amount of confidence in your abilities.



- JM: First of many, many rejection slips. It's something you get used to.
- CM: I know I've never sent anything off. I've written dozens of things, dozens, and I never send them. They're piled in boxes all over my house.
- JM: You think you would get used to rejection after awhile, but you never do. A rejection always hurts. The only consoling thing about so many rejections is that you know that this pain too will pass.
- CM: You mean like rejection in real life besides rejection in writing?
- JM: Yes. In high school I was tall, thin, pimped, and awkward, and I would get rejected by a couple of girls. That affects you. From that point on I've always been shy with women. It always takes a great deal of courage to ask someone out. When I do, when they say "yes", it's probably one of the biggest triumphs of that month.

One of the interesting things in college . . . You're always concerned with what other people think of you. I was editor of the paper, and I remember talking to some people after a couple of drinks. They were really worried that I was angry, what I was thinking about them. That was a shock to me: That anyone would care what I thought about them. I was always caring what they thought about me. That was sort of a revelation. I figured well, hell with that, I don't give a shit what people think about me. I'll just think about them and let them worry about it. That helped.

Getting involved in the theater helped. Getting involved in journalism helped. You can't really be shy in journalism. You really have to be super aggressive, especially in an area like Mahoning County and Youngstown. I started working at the Niles Times, which is a small paper, about 6,000 circulation. We had two larger papers, the Warren Tribune, which had about 45,000, and the Vindicator which had about 120,000. Niles was the battle ground. Niles was Chicago in journalism. You really had to claw and fight to get your stories. There was just no time for shyness. It was a matter of survival. That helped a great deal.

I graduated from the University of Akron in 1976. That last year in college I met Bob Woodward. I don't know if you know who Bob Woodward is. He's from the Washington Post, wrote All The President's Men. He came to speak there and I engineered it, that I would be in charge of it. I pulled

what few strings I had left from my year as editor of the paper. I got to pick him up from the airport.

CM: Oh, how wonderful!

JM: I took him to the hotel. I took him to the University of Akron. I got to know him. I was talking to him and telling him how such a hard time I was having getting a start in journalism. Sort of Catch 22--"Unless you have experience we're not going to hire you." So how do you get hired? He said all that's bullshit. He told me how he got his job, the way he did and all that.

CM: How did he?

JM: It was basically luck.

CM: He was a very young man when he pulled out that journalistic coup.

JM: Yes. Well, anyway this was right after All the President's Men. He took my name and phone number. He said if he came across any jobs he would give me a call. And of course, he didn't. That summer I went to my first Republican convention. I went there as a press secretary for the platform committee. That post was engineered for me by Ray Bliss. Ray Bliss was the trustee of University of Akron and was also the former chairman of the Republican National Party. I went to the convention looking for jobs. I didn't find any. I got back and I called Woodward. He didn't have anything. I ended up going to Washington just on the spur of the moment. I ended up at the Washington Post, snuck up to his office and waited out in the hall for him. He came out and was surprised to see me. He held me open for the prospect for a job as a research assistant for him. That was fine. But after keeping me on the string for so many months he said, "No, it's not going to be." But, I kept bugging him for three or four years, going to his house, sitting on his doorstep, waiting for him to arrive at the Washington Post; I literally hounded him.

CM: What would that entail, research assistant?

JM: I wasn't quite sure, but it involved working with the Washington Post and that's what I wanted. That came to not. I'm still after him. Matter of fact, last week I still sent him a bunch of clips saying I'm still interested in a job at the Washington Post.

CM: Does he reply to these inquiries?

JM: No. I usually end up having to go to his house, knocking on his door and having him say, "No, sorry, not interested." But anyway, after being disappointed with Woodward in

Washington, I got a call from my parents saying that there was a job with Akron Public Schools. Could I start tomorrow? I began my first full-time job out of college as an English teacher at an intercity junior high school in Akron, Ohio, which coming from a sort of Catholic, middle-class, white background, was like Alice going through the looking glass. It was a terrible, terrible strange and frightening experience to go through this old South High School building and see black faces stare at you.

CM: That's all they did was stare at you? When I went there they threw things at me.

JM: The seventh day there as a teacher, I was assaulted by this pretty large black kid who flunked several times. He was about fifteen, sixteen years old. I took a paper he was drawing on. He wanted it back. He wanted to start exercising karate on me. I ended up having to wrestle him down to the ground in front of the class; he wouldn't stop. It was so unreal. I felt like I was watching myself in a movie, a Fellini movie or something. I reached up, grabbed the door-knob, and I opened it up. The door opened and we fumbled out in the hall. We were still fighting up a storm. I look up and there are all the kids crowded around the doorway cheering and laughing. All of a sudden he stopped, and got up. He walked down to the principal's office. I got up and followed him. It was like he was taking me to the principal's office.

CM: He went there willingly?

JM: Yes, he knew what was coming. I appreciated it too, because I was getting pretty drained at that time. Anyway, it was a traumatic year. That was the only really physical violence I had to deal with. But the mental anxiety of dealing with that situation: the constant emphasis on discipline, the constant sniping, the constant jokes, the constant boring into you.

CM: You survived the year though?

JM: I was a wreck. I took every single day off I was entitled to and went looking for a job.

CM: I find that fascinating, Jim, because I did the same thing. I taught the seventh grade in an almost all black ghetto school. I taught English, and I had those problems. I couldn't stand it after four months, ended up in the hospital.

JM: I was close to that. But you know, at midyear I decided whether I had a job or not, I was going to quit. At that point, it was like night and day. It became easier. My attitude changed. I was more relaxed in that the kids could sense it. They responded better. In fact, I even toyed at the end of the

school year of staying on. But I made up my mind to quit. I threw the suitcase in the back of my car. I went from newspaper to newspaper and ended up at the Niles Times, which was a drop in salary from about \$12,000 a year to less than \$6,000 a year. That was more work, backing up a bit.

I first got involved in theater in a big way as a teacher. I got involved in a couple of productions. They were my salvation really. They kept my sanity for me.

CM: Was it at school?

JM: No. I went to the Canton Players Guild, and Coach House Theater in Akron. I did things like "The Last Meeting of the Knights of the White Magnolia", "Seascape", and "Move over Mrs. Markham". It was really important therapy for me. It was really a great release. At this point I could put those problems aside and be somebody else, do something else and really enjoy it. I don't think except for theater, I could have survived that year. Interesting idea, community theaters as therapy.

CM: That's what they really are. Some people I think describe more to them. I've kind of learned not to expect much. I know a lot of people use them as romantic breeding grounds. I didn't realize they go down to mate at the community theater. When I first found this out, I was astonished, and it's true. That's all they go there for.

JM: Those social reason, yes. But for me it was therapy. Why I'm involved in it now, I suppose it has a lot to do with ego, a sense of self-satisfaction. It's still a release. It's still a great sense of freedom.

I first got interested in playwrighting at the Niles Times. Because of the work schedule I was not able to act. So I turned to something I always had a thought about doing, that was trying to write a first play. I worked off and on on that for about two and a half years before I got a first draft that I was reasonably interested in.

CM: What was the first play?

JM: The first play was called "Sanhedron". It was about the trial of Christ from the perspective of the pharisees and priests. I've always been interested in religion, not as a fanatical believer. I always felt that a Catholic in a way is a lot like a Jew, even though Catholics won't recognize it. It doesn't matter whether you believe in the dogma or the mass or anything like that. Once you're born a Catholic you die a Catholic. It has got its claws in you. I don't know if you saw "Brides-head Revisited".

CM: No, I only saw two episodes.

- JM: It's something you just can't get away from. It's the way you think; the way you look at things. You may think you're being atheist or agnostic but you just cannot surrender that point of view.
- CM: Now Catholicism is going through upheaval, don't you think?
- JM: I was caught in the upheaval. The Archbishop Hoban High School was really rather lax in terms of religion. We didn't get any dogma at all. We got morality, ethics and things like that. I learned very little about the church, very little about the church history. That fascinated me. I learned more about the Catholic Church in a Western Culture Class at Akron University than I did in twelve years of Catholic education. I was fascinated by that. I feel if this is a part of me, if I can't shake it, let me find out what I really do believe. Do I become an atheist just because I stopped paying attention? Or do I deliberately, consciously decide I am going to be an atheist, or I am not going to be an atheist, or whatever? I wanted to go back. I did a lot of reading about Christ and the period there. I wanted to take as an objective look as I could at the documents and the records. Writing that play was sort of that means to do so. It is really very objective. I think it strips away a lot of the pretext of dogma and religious prejudice. It looks at it like the trial of Christ as a reporter would look at it using the gospels as a basis, and throwing in a few plot twists along the way, a lot of characters. I was really quite proud of the effort. It was finally produced at Kent State Trumbull Campus Theater.
- CM: When?
- JM: 1980, in the spring after getting rejected from all area theaters. The only reason it got put on there was because Jack Brizzi, the director, operates in a strange way. I got a tentative commitment to put on a TNT in the summer as sort of an experimental work. Jack is very big in experimentation. He likes to be the first to do things. When he found out that I was doing a show at TNT he got interested in it.
- CM: How many characters are in the play?
- JM: Oh, a cast of thousands. That was one of the problems with producing it. Because it had about thirteen to fifteen men and two principle women parts. I needed other women too, to do a stoning scene to open up.
- CM: Boy, I would like that. Are you planning on doing your revival?
- JM: Anyone could do a revival, revision. I thought it was very well recieved. I was very, very pleased with the experience. It was an exciting, awful experience. I mean it's like giving birth to a child that you hope will grow up to be a genius or

an Einstein. Instead you see him raised by surrogate parents to become a journalist or some other silly thing like that. It was really terrifying, agonizing and thrilling all at once. I mean, you write these great scenes with this powerful dialogue and somebody recites it. It comes out sounding like garbage. You know? You really begin to appreciate the theater as a cooperative effort. You really begin to appreciate the things that an actor can bring to the role. We had some actors, particularly one actress who brought a tremendous amount of feeling and depth to the role that I hadn't anticipated. Everyone was giving me credit for it. But that's fine. I'll take it, what the hell.

CM: Well, I saw another effort of yours called "Pipers". I really think you are a very good writer. There's absolutely no shallow spots in your writing. Its very confident writing. I like to write myself but I never do anything with it. So that's totally useless. I just write and stuff it in boxes. So when someone I know does something with their writing I'm very interested in it.

JM: You know everbody writes and stuffs it in boxes. I write and stuff it in boxes. The thing that makes all the difference in the world is endurance because everybody's first draft that I know is shit. It is just plain pure shit. What makes the difference is pulling it out three or four months later and rewriting it, and rewriting it, and rewriting it, and rewriting it. There are some playwrights like Edward Albee who say they think about it a long time. Then when their ready to type it just comes out like that, snap! I think that's an exception. I think writing is a very painful, frustrating experience. I don't think, it's something beyond the grasp of many people. I think there are a lot more potentially good writers out there.

CM: Well, the theater sure is needing them today, Jim. They're not showing up on the large stages of America.

JM: That's the whole issue in itself. I think it has more to do with making the right contacts.

But you know the big thing is it really doesn't pay. I mean I would say I worked about five years writing two stories. I haven't made a dime, but I spent at least two thousand more on it: making copies, typing, retyping, retyping, retyping, getting a new script retyped and bound and sent out. As soon as you send it out you say, "Goddamn, I want to change something here." So you go through the whole process of retyping, duplicating, binding and sending that out. As soon as I send those things, I think, "Damn, I have to rewrite it again." That's one of the consoling factors when you get a rejecting slip because you know they're rejecting the inferior version.

CM: Oh, I see.

JM: This good version I just completed has not been seen by their eyes. It makes the whole difference for the games we play.

CM: Can you kind of give a blow-by-blow rundown of those items that are necessary to attend to in order to send a script up. I mean after you semi-polished it according to your own approval. All the little things that readers of this world would be unaware of.

JM: Well, all the little things are what you follow in the Writer's Digest or Drama Source Book, or books that are readily available. I have not begun to make it anywhere outside this little Trumbull campus theater. I don't know if I ever will. But it's essentially writing a brief letter or introduction, putting a paper clip on that with your nicely bound script, sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope in return, putting it in a larger envelope and paying an arm and a leg postage and sending it off. Getting it back maybe twomonths later, six months later.

CM: Who do you send it off to?

JM: Anybody. Anybody who list themselves, say, in the Drama Source Books is saying, "Yes, we accept unsolicited scripts." They get a copy of mine. Most often you'll get a rejection slip. "Thank you very much, but it doesn't serve our present needs." But maybe once in awhile, maybe once out of every ten tries, you'll get a handwritten scribble saying, "This is pretty good. We can't use this but what else can you do?" That makes a world of difference. That keeps you going. That is your fix. I don't mind rejection slips. But those I mind least are the ones that just scribbled on a few comments. Those become your life blood. Those are what you seek after. I never have gotten an acceptance slip in the mail, so I don't know what that experience is like. But I get my victories from those handwritten scribble from a reader, a director, a small theater like Syracuse or wherever.

CM: I hadn't realized you were a triple threat like that. Which of those three areas are you the most interested in succeeding in?

JM: I don't know. I'm really concentrating on two areas. In terms of acting . . .

CM: Acting and playwrighting.

JM: In playwrighting and reporting. I would love to act. I would love it. I have an ambition, everybody does, to act off Broadway or Broadway. I think it would be marvelous. But I don't think I have the will to go up against that many rejections

as an actor. I mean I've been going up against the wall as a playwright and as a reporter looking for other newspaper jobs. I think that's enough.

CM: Do you think this trip to New York let's say per se, is necessary to do that, for the ultimate rejection acceptance?

JM: Perhaps. Maybe, I don't know. Maybe you can say that better than I can.

CM: I'm thinking of another person that's a double threat at least to Sam Shepard who writes plays and acts quite well. He seems to have mastered the ability to be able to stand there.

JM: But he never really made it in New York.

CM: He has made it in my book, in the books of people that care about good theater. There's an interesting example, the man has a very good living, always has revenue.

JM: Well, I always had this fantasy that one of my plays are going to be produced off Broadway. At least I don't think I've written anything that could put me near Broadway. I'm not really all that interested in that. But can anyone in my place produce and as playwright have some say on who is cast and force my way into that cast.

CM: That's what Shepard does. I just think, isn't that wonderful to be able to write the play and then have enough back and forth reprieve.

JM: That's my dream. But I'm really split between playwrighting and journalism. Playwrighting doesn't pay at all, but I'm toying with the idea of going to the Yale University for the graduate program in playwrighting, not necessarily because of the education, which God knows I can use, but basically to build some contacts. Half of the people you run into who've made it in New York have some connection with Yale.

CM: Nine-tenths.

JM: Okay, I stand corrected. That's a very powerful attraction, but there's no money in it. Then I'm not really ready to throw in the towel in journalism because . . .

CM: But you could earn your living in journalism in another city. So therefore that should give you more of a springboard. I'm sure without any doubt you could get a job as a reporter or with the TV affiliates.

JM: But you know, you want to work your way up. I'm not just looking to go to any newspaper; I'm looking to take a step up.



I can get a job, I'm sure, at any paper with a fifty to sixty thousand circulation range. I'm looking for a paper with a hundred thousand to a hundred and fifty thousand. That's getting hard because the market is very tight. I do like this job. Especially in the competitive situation like you have with the Vindicator and the Tribune. When you get a scoop, when you really beat the pants off the other paper, it's something like getting an orgasm. It's that great of a thrill. I like the competition. I like that aspect of working here. I'm not ready to give that up.

CM: Do you find the two blend well, theater and politics?

JM: Yes, I think they blend very, very well.

CM: I think we have some examples of that in our country today.

JM: Yes, but you know it is sort of interesting that both actors and politicians are competing for the chance to work miracles for the audience.

CM: Oh, I haven't thought about it that way.

JM: I wrote that a little while ago. It just came to my head.

CM: Tell me what your family thinks of all this and which direction they would like you to go. Do they have a preference?

JM: Yes. They would like me to do exactly what I'm doing now, being a full-time reporter and a part-time playwright. I think that if I ever confessed that my ambition is to either get a new job by the new year or to go to Yale next year, I think they would sort of freak out. I feel reasonably confident that I can get in, but I'm not so reasonably confident that I could afford to.

CM: Could you tell me what you do need to get into Yale?

JM: I will find out later this year when I get their mailing back. I mean I've written them several times this year.

CM: How do you start the process of applying to Yale?

JM: You write and say "Please send me all the information you have about this particular program." They don't answer you. You write again, and they don't answer you. You write again and they send you back a card saying, "We're publishing that stuff now and it's too late for this year, but you're going to be on our mailing list this following year."

CM: They do that deliberately?

JM: That's the way they did it to me.

- CM: Is it really true that you can't get in there without pull and a lot of money?
- JM: I don't know. I'll find out.
- CM: I've been told that by so many people about Yale and Harvard.
- JM: But, you know, I'm open to alternative things. I mean I may change my mind and do something else. I like what I'm doing as a reporter, and I would like the challenge of being a playwright, but there's no money in that. What am I going to be doing ten years from now? What am I not going to be doing? I'm not going to be a reporter ten years from now. I can tell you that definitely because I'll probably be burnt out. I don't want to be an editor, which is the only real way to move up the ladder in a newspaper.
- CM: I think you're going to be a playwright.
- JM: I don't want to be an editor because I'm having enough trouble sorting out my own prose. I don't want to agonize over somebody else's. I'm not a very good speller, and that has always haunted me. When you write a play you get a lot of criticism, but nobody criticizes you for your misspelling. I think it's wonderful.
- CM: I never thought about that.
- JM: I'm a pretty bad speller. I've been trying to improve. It's something that once you get a reputation, you don't lose it.
- CM: Who is the reputation with?
- JM: With the editors.
- CM: Do you also get a reputation of being a very cohesive top writer, which you are?
- JM: Well, I try to foster that reputation.
- CM: But your writing is the final judgment on that. I mean I don't think people care about spelling. Aren't there girls who sit there to correct that?
- JM: Yes, but to be an all-around reporter you have to possess some basic skills and one is spelling. There's just no way of getting around that. I was a bad speller as an English teacher. In fact, I would never write on the board because I wouldn't want those bratty thirteen year olds correcting my spelling.
- We were taking off on a point I made earlier about the fact that once I decided I was going to quit--I was not coming back. It was an absolute decision, irrevocable. No chance

in hell I would be back--my attitude changed. The kids could sense that, they really could. I began to enjoy it, believe it or not. Enjoy is too strong of a word, I wouldn't say enjoy. I would say . . .

CM: Not despise.

JM: Not despise. It was so funny. It was a strong immediate transformation. It just blew me away.

CM: Did you even get a sort of fondness for the kids?

JM: Yes.

CM: See they sent me love letters while I was in the hospital to the effect that they said, "Oh, Miss Mills, if you come back we'll never be mean again. We admit we were prejudice towards you." I have these letters. I saved them.

JM: I saved all my stuff too. In fact, I wrote a journal. I kept a journal, a daily journal. I showed it to Helen Carringer, the education editor of the Beacon Journal. I thought she might be interested. She gave it back to me. She said, "This is the most depressing thing I've ever read in my life." It was so funny that attitude of the teachers. I mean, first of all we were like in a combat zone. We were knocking the kids, knocking professions, being very self-doubting.

CM: Negative too.

JM: But then for some reason someone would start bragging about something. Everybody sort of got defensive. It was really a double life.

CM: What was the name of this school?

JM: It was Thornton Junior High. They wanted to be professional. They wanted to do a good job. They wanted to present that facade. But on the other hand they were aware of the reality, the humor, the bitterness, the self-doubts, the agony, the anxiety, and . . .

CM: The low pay.

JM: The low pay and you were switching back and forth between those two attitudes.

CM: Did you have difficulty with the other teachers?

JM: No, they were pretty supportive.

As I was talking about earlier, what I'm going to be doing ten years from now. I don't really know what options are

available to me. Even if I go to Yale to be a playwright, that doesn't pay. I'm going to have to do something else. What else are you going to do?

CM: You sound like you're standing on a five pronged highway. You can go down any one of the paths and have pretty much of the insurance that you're going to make it.

JM: You never have the insurance that you're going to make it. You never know where you're going to end up. I do have a number of options, for which I'm grateful. I can see returning to teaching perhaps, if all else fails.

CM: What level?

JM: Whatever level will hire me. Concentrating my spare time on writing. I mean because teaching has one terrific advantage over every other profession and you know it--those three months off.

CM: That summer off, so you can travel. That's why I was interested in it.

JM: That is an outstanding advantage. It's one of the biggest draws for teaching.

CM: Also the hours, working 8:30 to 2:30 or 3:00.

JM: Weekends off.

CM: You know yourself you put in a long day today. How long have you been working today?

JM: I started work at 7:30 and I finished about 8:00.

CM: That's a solid day. Did you have a lunch hour?

JM: I had a lunch hour.

CM: I know you put in very long hours on the several times I've talked to you at the paper. Why is that? Why is it necessary for you to work so many hours?

JM: Well, basically with the job as politics writer I don't have that many meetings to cover, or that many assigned stories. I have to generate them myself. In slow periods, it takes a lot of work to generate a story. It's all enterprise. You have to pick up a story from conversation, or chance remark. You make all kinds of telephone calls or maybe somebody will mention something that is interesting to follow up on, that kind of thing. You just spend a lot of time trying to come up with a good story. It's just like going to a council meeting, and writing it up for the next day. You have to

really fish out the story, or fish out the column. That takes a lot of time. Also I'm not a fast writer. Oh, and I like to rewrite. I like to write a story at night and come back and rewrite it the next day.

CM: Are you given much leeway in control in your own work at this paper?

JM: Pretty much. I was assigned to do a story on the media in Mahoning Valley. This appeared about two weeks ago. It was so vague; it was like they were assigning me to do a dissertation. I sort of weeded it down to let's do a, "How the media is reacting to the recession." I still ended up with a huge or humongous article that was as boring as hell. But anyway, I wrote about the Tribune too. I wrote a few things about how circulation is stable, but how it is still shaky, people who have canceled because they were laid off from work. Cancellations shot up remarkably, something like 34 in a three month period a year ago. We have about 797 for the same time this year. I also wrote how the Sunday Magazine, because of the advertisers didn't really like it, shrunk from about seven to eight pages to four pages.

CM: They didn't like that?

JM: They scratched all that out. I got in a big argument with them. I ended up taking my by-line off of the story. But that's usually rare. I do have a great deal of freedom in what I say, especially in my columns. No one has ever said, "No, you can't write in my columns." No one has ever said, "No, you can't write that." Editors are very helpful. They prevent you from making a lot of stupid mistakes and getting yourself in jams.

CM: Jim, did you just start off in the paper as a by-line column?

JM: No. I worked for the Niles Times covering Warren. Then I was hired for the Warren Tribune to cover Niles.

CM: Are you serious?

JM: I covered Niles for about a year. There was an opening at the political beat; I jumped at it and got it.

CM: It just happened to come up and it was offered to you?

JM: I did a couple political stories which impressed them. The politics reporter was being elevated to an editor, so I got the job.

CM: Have you ever thought about really being involved in the political scene in Washington D.C., like you said with the Post, going down there cold and seeing what you could pick up?

- JM: Well, I did. You mean looking for a job?
- CM: You said you were trying to approach the one fellow through Post.
- JM: Yes. I started at this press building. It's this huge building with all kinds of press organizations in fourteen floors. I started on the top floor and worked my way down. I got rejection after rejection after rejection. We were talking about that. It's not just with getting a rejection for a play or something. You get rejected from a job, you face that day after day. Your self-esteem just goes right through the bottom of the floor. It really takes a lot of inner strength to keep going because of the depression, the agony, and the self-doubting.
- CM: Especially if you tend to be kind of an isolated person.
- JM: You went through that as an actress.
- CM: Yes.
- JM: I'm going through that now as a playwright. I don't know if I want to go through that as an actor. You put yourself in a position to be knocked down very, very hard.
- CM: I'll tell you something. I have a son that gave it up. I used to think he was hiding, but I really think he means it. He said it's not worth the humiliation.
- JM: I don't think so either. I would like to act, but not that much. I mean the rejection you get from the play is sort of sanitized. You get a piece of paper. You don't see somebody face-to-face. They don't say, "No. Next?" You get a sheet of paper. It sorts of blunts it.
- CM: But see, with all your abilities I really think you could go to a place like that and function in one area to earn your money.
- JM: I don't know.
- CM: You kind of seem like a triple threat. The main worry that everybody has doing that, is how will they earn their living? How will they feed themselves?
- JM: I like money. I really do.
- CM: I want to get some. I'm tired of being poor. Have you ever been poor? I've been poor.
- JM: I've lived like a monk, but that doesn't mean I dislike money. I save it. I have a twenty-thousand dollar money market

certificate.

CM: Then you do great thing, like travel.

JM: Yes.

CM: Aren't you going to Scotland next month?

JM: Yes. I'm going to the Edinburgh Festival.

CM: Tell me about that.

JM: I'm going to spend four days there, four days traveling, and four days in Findhorn. It's a commune on the north end of Scotland where people believe that there is a certain spirit to plants and animal life. You can communicate with that spirit. It will help you grow vegetables. You talk to vegetables; you caress them and love them. I think that might be a good setting for a play.

CM: What do you expect to garner from a trip like that, besides material for it?

JM: Well, that's something new. I never traveled before with the idea of getting material for a play. I don't know. I never was asked that. Why do I like to travel?

Maybe I'm searching for some sort of excitement that I never really experienced. I think I'm a romantic in the sense that I'm sort of searching, an idealist. I look for things that are exciting and enticing. I look for an experience that would fit in the Three Musketeers or a spy novel or a sordid romance. I always came up with something of a pale imitation, but I'm still looking for that kind of thing. When I told you as an adolescent I did not do the naughty and moral things that adolescents do, maybe I'm going through that stage right now. I'm searching to find out that naughtiness, that wickedness, that sense of excitement right now.

CM: You don't talk about being married or having a relationship. Is that not heavy on your mind right now?

JM: Oh, yes, it is. Once you become maybe in your late twenties it sort of hits you one day. Loneliness is sort of underrated, but it's certainly not everything. It certainly would be nice to have a family. I don't think I've done everything that I want to do. I live a very, very hectic life and I think if I would have been married, I would be divorced already. Because of the hours I put in at work, because of theater, and because of the writing, my life style now is really not suited to marriage. I'm not opposed to it. I think I will be.

CM: You don't feel a void though. It's just something that hasn't come along yet.

- JM: I don't have that many long relationships. I think people lose patience with me.
- CM: Why?
- JM: Because I'm always doing things. I'm not cultivating a relationship with some girl as much as I'm cultivating ambition or a play or a project or something. I'm very selfish I guess.
- CM: Well, you see you have to look at it two ways. Do they want to be with some narrow individual that doesn't do anything but just look at them. I guess they do, a lot of people. Then you realize maybe it's better that way.
- JM: This may sound chauvinistic, I don't intend it to. Single women after their mid-twenties are . . . There is a sense of unstated desperation there.
- CM: Oh, how true?
- JM: No matter how independent and how liberated they want to feel, for so many of them, they do want a lasting relationship.
- CM: They also feel the same about living up to expectations.
- JM: And marriage. Yes. Society still expects it of them and they're playing along with it. I'm sort of leery about that, because it's sort of getting, you know, stuck in tar, baby. That's a bad analogy.
- CM: No matter how modern we say our society is, marriage is supposed to be something to do. It's part of the life that you're supposed to live. If you don't, you're found lacking.
- JM: Or gay, or effeminent.
- CM: Something, I don't know. All kinds of labels are stuck on you when you reach a certain age.
- JM: Sure, spinster.
- CM: Jim is also so involved in political writing. We're going to have political talk here.
- JM: I'm a registered Republican. I come from a staunchly Democratic family, with the roots in the founding of the United Auto Workers. I'm sort of looked on as the black sheep. The reason I'm Republican is because Ray Bliss got me a job at a Republican convention. Out of loyalty to him I became a Republican, and I stayed that way. I think I'm rather moderate. But when I write editorials for the Tribune--I'm writing for a publisher who has left, who was



liberal. Who wanted to endorse a Barry Commoner. We had to talk her out of it, and to endorse John Anderson . . . So you sort of push your views in the background and sort of adopt her's, so to speak. In terms of my own opinion, I'm appalled by Reagan, but I'm sort of attracted to him too. I do think some of the things that he's doing are necessary. His idea of shifting a lot of the programs back to the states has gotten a lot of bad press. But I've seen some examples locally.

I just did a story about a black community in southern Trumbull County, called Maplewood Park, which applied federal grants for sewers, waters, and all kinds of things, to fix it up as it should be fixed up. They got turned down repeatedly. But under the Reagan block grant program the funds are distributed to the states who distribute them to the counties. The county commissioners decided that this black community needed these funds and that's where it went. In a sense, this rebirth of the black community owes itself to Reagan and federalism. That aspect of it appeals to me. I really like government on the local level. I realize there are problems with that, but I think on that point of view he has hit the mark. Some of the budget cuts troubled me a great deal. The defense spendings trouble me a great deal. But living within a reasonable budget doesn't upset me. I think the tax cut upsets more than the budget cuts, because I felt he had an opportunity to govern in a socially responsible way. He blew it.

I don't really spend that much time on national politics. We have national writers, national columnists. I concentrate on local politics, the grass roots people. The people running for congress here. The people running for commissioner here. I noticed a trend in city government. That the really top quality people--your bankers, your businessmen, and your labor leaders--are not running for office. They're leaving it to the blue-collar candidates, the back doormachines, the party machine candidates, those looking for patronage jobs, those who are looking for jobs, those who don't have anything else. There's nothing wrong with having these people on council, but to have them totally in control with council is very disturbing. They don't have a perspective on how city council, for example, should run, and how to delegate authority. They serve as mini mayors. I think you see that in Youngstown as much as anywhere else. You don't elect a councilman you elect your own political boss. That troubles me a great deal.

In a sense it attracts me. I mean you write about something for so long, you see all the mistakes people are making. You say, "These people don't know how to begin to know how to run a campaign." I find myself, and I have to watch it, giving advice. That's a sin in this profession. I mean, you're an

objective observer. You're not a participant, which is one of the things that makes theater writing so attractive for me,, I mean, to review some people on stage that are going to be acting with you in the next show. I'm digressing, but on those kinds of things I overcompensate. I have this martyr's complex that I must criticize these people. I must do it right. I must blister them and withstand the scorn and the backbiting that I'll deal with when I'm in Sherlock Holmes' next show, or something like that.

CM: I'm interested to hear you say that, Jim. You're very hard on yourself. I do that too. If a friend asks for my opinion in theater, I really tell them the truth.

JM: I'm more hard.

CM: I agonize about it.

JM: I'm harder on my friends, I think unfairly so, than I am on strangers. I would think people are watching my reviews and thinking, "Oh, Joe X is a friend of Jim Macak. That's why he got a good review." It's not fair to Joe X. But I sort of give him a good looking over, more so than some of the other cast members.

CM: Who critiques your acting efforts for your paper?

JM: We have theater reviewers who regularly hide in closets, then try to get out of it. They are under a lot of pressure. They also go through sort of a martyr complex. I mean, this is a fellow employee that I have to review. How objective am I going to be? They do it. I've gotten good reviews, and I've gotten bad reviews.

CM: Being the new Clyde Barns wouldn't interest you?

JM: I like reviewing. I think it's a lot of fun. My other efforts get in the way of that.

CM: But if you made big bucks doing it for a New York paper?

JM: But that would mean I would have to give up my fantasy about acting there. I think I would be a frustrated actor being a critic. It's all right as a side line, but I think I would rather act than be a sort of parasite who lives off of others' creativity. Other great writers, all they are are parasites. They're just living off of someone else's creativity.

CM: I would like to know more about how Jim Macak . . . Is it "may-sick" or "may-sack"?

JM: It's pronounced "may-sack". It's sort of a bastardized

version of "mach-ak". I don't know how it came that way.

CM: You didn't talk about the month you were born which is February, what?

JM: Second. Groundhog Day.

CM: Now do you think you got that backing to become that solidly grounded in your early childhood years, in your family life? Where did that come from, the Catholic upbringing?

JM: Oh, good question. I'm not sure I have a good answer for that. What in my history has sort of made me what I am today? I think it was a sense of isolation and knowing that I'm not going to make it on my charm, good looks, or my athletic ability, that I'm going to have to find something else, something else to take pride in, something else to do. It was in art. It was in reading. It was in writing. Especially writing, it's a very lonely profession. I don't mean to sound melodramatic but it is. You're by yourself with your pencil and pad. You spend hours drawing doodles until an idea pops in your head. I think a sense of competitiveness entered there, but I don't know where.

CM: Was it with your brother?

JM: No. I think I'm one of the few people that actually likes to audition.

CM: I like to audition.

JM: I really like to go off and get challenged. I remember we did Sherlock Holmes; I was told Dick Boyd had that part lined up. I was disappointed because I really wanted that role.

CM: Who did this? Where would this be at?

JM: TNT. So I took the play and I memorized all the lines, prior to audition. They called me up. They said, "All right, Jim, would you read this-and-this passage." I took that book and put it on the table. I said, "My dear Watson, you do look . . ." and just starting rattling on three hundred miles throughout the opening. I just loved it; I lived it. I like competition. I'm not good in sports, but I hate to lose. I don't know when that seed was planted in me.

CM: Being in the middle, two boys younger and two boys older, maybe . . .

JM: There must have been some competition for attention. I was looking for good hard criticism in my work that I never got. I got it from this neighbor, Mrs. Nelson. I guess encouragement from my parents, sort of the patronizing kind.

CM: I see.

JM: I don't know where the competitiveness got started, but it did some how in high school. It was combined with a sense of loneliness. Competition and loneliness that's sort of an explosive mix. That sort of fired me on.

CM: You know, this Catholic background . . . I know you're aware that in New York at the present time--I'm really rather bitter about this because I predicted this but I didn't do anything about it--there are five plays running about the dilemma of Catholicism, two of them, great successes, at the present time. All of a sudden it has become a fad to unveil your various neuroses that have been reeked upon you by the Catholic church. Now it is a fad of Broadway.

JM: Yes. It's sort of strange. It's sort of old-fashioned. I mean it's nothing new. I was in London in 1973 and I saw these old sort of critical Catholic plays that writers have to exorcise these spirits. These mean, manly nuns beating the shit out of you with a ruler. But that's old.

CM: Why do you think that's going through Broadway?

JM: People went to the Baltimore Catechism up to the 1950's. Since that time, since Vatican II at least, the Catholic education I had was surprisingly liberal, very little dogma, very little history.

CM: What will Vatican II mean to a person reading this fifty years from now? What was Vatican II?

JM: Well, Vatican I, if I'm correct, was an attempt by the Catholic Church Counter of the Reformation. There was a lot of abuses in the church. This was in the Middle Ages and people felt that we were going to break away. We were going to form Lutherism, Calvinism, and all that because Catholicism is corrupt. It was. To counter that, Catholics realized they needed to get their act in order. They came up with these strict rules. People were too lax. This is what you have to do. This is how you have to think. This is what we have to do to survive. Well, that was okay for that period. But now they are saying it has become absurd in the later 1950's and 1940's. I mean, the dogma is just way out of it. I mean, very anti-Semitic things have worked themselves into the Catholic faith. We have to open ourselves up to a couple new ideas. We have to hold onto the traditional things, but we have to look at them in a new way. That was Vatican II. It was--open window and let a little fresh air in. Maybe we don't have to learn that much about church history, but it's important to realize how we as Christians react to war, a campus protest, how we react to situation ethics, how the Catholics respond to modern problems. You just can't go

Baltimore Catechism and say, look up Column B Section A and see how to react to my wife having a nervous breakdown. What else is there in Catholicism that will give us some guidance on how to react? That is the sort of thing taught to you. It was good. It was helpful. I was going through a period, what the hell am I? Why am I Catholic and not Presbyterian? Why am I going to this school? What is it about Christianity that I'm supposed to believe in? Those thoughts eventually led to "Sanhedron" and then partly to "Pipers".

CM: I want to know, do you still go to church?

JM: No. I think I'm a good Catholic except for the fact I hate mass with a passion.

CM: What do you hate about it?

JM: I get bored. It bores me silly. I just hate it. It's like I'm wasting my time. I get nothing out of it. I look forward to a sermon because I think that sometime the priest will say something interesting. But most often it's boring rubbish and they say it in a monotone.

CM: If I were directing it in a play I would say, "Pick up your timing".

JM: I would say, "Let me talk with a priest, or talk with some Buddhists about life or something. I'm not getting anything out of this."

CM: Do your parents still attend church?

JM: Yes. When I go back to Akron I invariably attend church because it's easier going to church than arguing with my parents. Going through the guilt trip of my mother saying, "I know you're not going up there."

CM: You just told me on the telephone, when I spoke to you, that you recently moved a few months ago. Did you get a home of your own? You said, "I moved".

JM: Did I?

CM: Yes. It was a few months ago.

JM: No.

CM: Did you get a new place?

JM: No, I still live in Vienna.

CM: How long?

- JM: Ever since I moved here. At the Niles Times, I was taking home less than a hundred dollars a week. I had to have an apartment that was cheap. I found one out in Vienna. It cost me \$100 a month rent. Since then it has gone up to \$130 in five years, which is not too bad.
- CM: Oh, you've been there for five years?
- JM: I always felt that when I got a better job with the Tribune or the Vindicator I would get a better apartment. But I hate to move. It suits me. It's cheap and it's small. I'm sticking with it. I always look at it as a temporary place.
- I'm not negative toward Ohio. I'm not negative toward my history. It just wasn't enough. I just didn't do enough. I didn't experience enough. I didn't have enough friends. I was too much by myself. I didn't get into trouble like I should have.
- In "Sanhedron", there are two main characters, a pharisee who's a good guy, and a priest who's a bad guy. They are both extentions of my personality. In fact, I had my English professor come over and see "Sanhedron". He said, "This is sort of the play that you had to get out of your system before you could write your great play." That's probably true, because I tried to put a hell of a lot in that play, a hell of a lot of me, a hell of a lot of my philosophy.
- CM: Will you let me read it?
- JM: Oh, I would be happy to. I'm still very proud of it. I think it still holds up. I mean, you write something and you go back and look at it years later and it's a bunch of shit.
- CM: Whatever else a play has--I may be trite--but to me I just demand the dialogue catch my attention immediately. Your play that I saw did.
- JM: The first one is entirely different. It may be too dry in terms of dialogue. I'm really happy the way it worked out. It has a few plot twists that I think are dynamite. It has got a lot of good understated tension. There are no big explosive passionate scenes, but there's a level of tension all the way throughout.
- CM: I want to know about when you travel. Which of the places you traveled did you find were the most theatrically rich? If you happened to take notice of that.
- JM: Well, I'm an Anglophile. I could go back to England with the drop of a hat.

CM: London?

JM: Yes.

CM: West end London?

JM: Part of the reasons for traveling the Far East and South America and through Europe, it is such a pleasure to be in a country that speaks English. You know? You're in France and you know some of the grammar. You just don't have the vocabulary. You go through that every stinking thought you have. The French are not very compassionate.

CM: They really do act kind of strange to Americans, don't they? I've had a lot of people say that.

JM: But you know Peru was also fascinating. In Peru it has a stark desolate mountain beauty that just knocks you out. Especially, going down to the train, down to the Amazon basin in Monshu Pizhu, up on these little hills. I came back and drank corn beer. Had diarrhea for the rest of the trip.

CM: Corn beer?

JM: Yes.

CM: What else in London, the theaters there, do you find that it gives a more overall higher quality of performance levels than is found in the New York theater?

JM: Maybe. I have never realized the virtues of the off Broadway in London. The friends that I have are in New York, so I'm sort of a bit more appreciative of New York than I am of London. When I discovered theater in London, at the time I stuck to the big established theaters. You subsequently find that all the really thoughtful work is fermenting in these smaller theaters. I've never really explored them like I have in New York.

CM: Ticket prices are much more within the reach of the common person, aren't they?

JM: Yes. I love London. I love theater. I don't think I really, really touched the nerve of London theater. I think I have in New York.

CM: How often do you go to New York?

JM: I go to New York about once or twice a year. I see about nine plays in a week.

CM: Cram plays in.

JM: Yes, absolutely. I overdose on plays.

CM: I want to know if you would feel comfortable in the company of Sam Shephard and those fellows?

JM: Well, I don't know. I never really met an established playwright. I don't know what my reaction will be with them or them to me. I wrote to Scotland. I wrote to the people there and said I would like to meet them. I think I'll have a chance to meet playwrights in Edinburgh that I hadn't had anywhere else.

CM: Will you let me know when you get back what happened?

JM: Yes.

CM: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW